

Pregnancy Test Popular Culture - Television

Popular Culture: Television

"If ye water turns blue, a baby for you! If purple ye see, no baby thar be! If ye test should fail, to a doctor set sail!"

- - From "Barnacle Bill's Home Pregnancy Test"
The Simpsons, Episode 47, "I Married Marge," December 26, 1991.

Marge Simpson was not pregnant, but as she took her home pregnancy test she joined dozens of other television women for whom peeing on a stick is a common plot point. How far television has come since Hot Lips' pregnancy scare forced her M*A*S*H comrades to threaten the life of Radar's rabbit! In today's television-world, it is a rite of spring to take a pregnancy test in May, and force America to wait for the season premiere the next fall to learn the results rather than the three minutes it would take in real life. But the test is usually portrayed as simple, no dead rabbits necessary.



Rachel stares at her positive pregnancy test as her friend Monica looks on, (Friends, 2001)

Perhaps the most culturally significant pregnancy test on television came in May and September of 1991 when Murphy Brown's 20 tests turned up positive (Episodes 75 & 76, "Uh-Oh"). A year later, when she delivered baby Avery, a national discussion, prompted by Vice President Dan Quayle's remarks, ensued about single motherhood. However, most television home pregnancy tests reveal more about the characters' dalliances than national controversies.

Though certainly most characters do not discuss the science behind the home pregnancy test, its very presence on so many different kinds of television shows and movies geared at different audiences hints at its cultural relevance. The pregnancy test is an example of a home healthcare product that is familiar to millions of people. And here's a hint: If you don't want people to know you have taken a pregnancy test, don't leave the kit in the trashcan.

Here are some examples of the pregnancy test in television shows of the past decades. Dates listed are original air dates.

- Margaret ("Hot Lips") thinks she might be pregnant, but the only rabbit available for the test is Radar's pet, Fluffy. Hawkeye promises not to kill the rabbit while performing the test. (M*A*S*H, Episode 142, "What's Up, Doc?" January 30, 1978)
- Blanche is worried she might be pregnant so she takes a home pregnancy test, but it turns out that she's going through menopause. (The Golden Girls, Episode 26, "End of the Curse," September 27, 1986)
- Teenager Christine "Spike" Nelson, suspects she may be pregnant after losing her virginity at a friend's party. She buys a home pregnancy test, which her mother catches her trying to hide. (DeGrassi Junior High, Episode 11, "It's Late" March 29, 1987)
- Roseanne thinks she might be pregnant. (Roseanne, Episode 48, "The Test," September 18, 1990)
- Murphy takes test after test after test even though each one clearly shows she is pregnant. (Murphy Brown, Episode 75 & 76, "Uh Oh," May 20 and September 16, 1991)
- Brenda takes a test after she sleeps with Dylan, and her parents find it in the trash. She's not pregnant. (Beverly Hills, 90210, Episode 23, "Beach Blanket Brandon," July 11, 1991)
- Marge takes a pregnancy test while Bart and Lisa discuss having another sibling. (The Simpsons, Episode 47, "I Married Marge," December 26, 1991)
- Patty takes a pregnancy test and discovers she is not pregnant; Graham is dissatisfied as he had wanted a son to follow his two daughters. (My So-Called Life, Episode 7, "Why Jordan Can't Read," October 6, 1994)
- Sylvia takes a second pregnancy test and tells Andy at work. She asks him not to tell everybody, but he does. (NYPD Blue, Episode 46, "Torah!" October 31, 1995)

- Jill and Bailey wait nervously for the pregnancy test results as Bailey pledges never to have sex again. They are relieved to see the negative result. (Party of Five, Episode 22, "The Ides of March," March 15, 1995)
- Jamie takes a pregnancy test which comes up positive, leading to a reconciliation with her estranged husband Paul. (Mad About You, Episode 95, "The Finale III," May 19, 1996)
- Paige takes a pregnancy test as she, Ellen, and Audrey contemplate their lives. (Ellen, Episode 71, "The Pregnancy Test," November 20, 1996)
- Phoebe's brother and his girlfriend bring over a pregnancy test so she can see if the implantation worked and she is on her way to being a surrogate mother. (Friends, Episode 85, "The One with the Embryos," January 15, 1998)
- Carrie has a late period, but isn't sure whether she wants the pregnancy test to be positive or negative. (Sex and the City, "The Baby Shower," August 9, 1998)
- Apu and Manjula take two home pregnancy tests with readouts resembling a slot machine. The first test reads: baby, baby, lemon. The next time, a pirate shows up instead of a lemon. They are sad until they realize that pirates are wild and Manjula is pregnant. They end up having octuplets. (The Simpsons, "Eight Misbehavin'," November 21, 1999)
- Lily hides her pregnancy test kit from Grace, Carla, and Zoe, but Judy finds it. She takes the test later with Rick, after discussing what they want the results to be. (Once and Again, Episode 208, "Life Out of Balance," January 10, 2001)
- Joey takes a pregnancy test and is relieved to find she has not followed in her sister's footsteps by getting pregnant in high school. (Dawson's Creek, Episode 19, "Late," April 25, 2001)
- Jerome finds a pregnancy test in the bathroom, but isn't sure if it was taken by Niecy, Alicia, or Brenda. We never find out, as the show was subsequently cancelled. (Moesha, Episode 127, "Paying the Piper," May 14, 2001)
- Rachel and Phoebe find the test in the trash. Phoebe assumes it's Monica's, but really it's Rachel's. (Friends, Episode 170, "The One with Chandler and Monica's Wedding," May 17, 2001)
- Rachel takes another pregnancy test and shows the positive result to Monica and Phoebe. (Friends, Episode 171, "The One After 'I Do'," September 27, 2001)
- Felicity takes a pregnancy test which comes out positive. She tells Noel and Ben that she might be pregnant and that Noel might be the father. However, a blood test shows that she is not, in fact, pregnant. (Felicity, Episode 66, "Miss Conception," October 31, 2001)
- Teri is in the safe house and decides to take the pregnancy test. Kimberly sees the box in the trash can. (24, Episode 15, "2-3pm" March 12, 2002)
- Grace takes a pregnancy test to see if the artificial insemination worked while Will, Karen, and Jack stand watch outside the bathroom door. (Will & Grace, Episode 100, "Bacon and Eggs," October 3, 2002)
- Lucy thinks she might be pregnant so she and her sister Mary go buy a test. (7th Heaven, Episode 154, "Life and Death (2)," May 19, 2003)
- Paul finds a home pregnancy test and worries it might be from one of his daughters. (8 Simple Rules for Dating my Teenage Daughter, Episode 28, "Sort of an Officer and a Gentleman," May 20, 2003)
- Niles and Daphne are trying to get pregnant. She takes what she thinks is an ovulation test, but soon realizes she is holding a positive pregnancy test. (Frasier, Episode 241, "No Sex Please, We're Skittish," September 23, 2003)
- Helen doesn't know what to think when she gets the results from her home pregnancy test. Confusion results when Luke finds the test kit in the trash and thinks it must have been Joan's. (Joan of Arcadia, Episode 10, "Drive, He Said," December 5, 2003)
- Tina surprises Bette with the news that they're going to have a baby by setting the dinner table for three and putting the positive pregnancy test at the third setting. (The L Word, Episode 4, "Lies, Lies, Lies," February 8, 2004)
- Brooke takes a pregnancy test and thinks she is pregnant with her ex-boyfriend Lucas's baby. It later turns out to have been a false positive. (One Tree Hill, Episode 19, "How Can You Be Sure?" April 20, 2004.)
- Theresa takes a home pregnancy test alone. Later, she confides in Marissa that she is pregnant, and that she doesn't know if the father is abusive fiance Eddie or ex-boyfriend Ryan. (The O.C., Episode 26, "The Strip," April 28, 2004.)
- Charlie talks an acquaintance through taking a home pregnancy test and explains that it's the stick that changes color. (Two and a Half Men, Episode 24, "Can You Feel My Finger?" May 24, 2004.)
- Val takes a pregnancy test at the airport, but on the way home Rick throws it out of the taxicab window so he can propose to her before learning the result. (What I Like About You, Episode 45, "Europe Was So Much More Fun," September 17, 2004)
- Michael takes unusual measures to find out if Maggie is really pregnant, planting people in the bathroom to steal a sample of her urine for the test. Unfortunately, they test the wrong woman's urine. (Arrested Development, Episode 34, "My Hand to God," March 6, 2005)
- Cristina, who is having an affair with her boss, thinks she has the flu but finally takes a pregnancy test. (Grey's Anatomy, Episode 7, "The Self Destruct Button," May 8, 2005)

This is certainly not a complete list. If you have other examples, [email the Office of NIH History](#).

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